

REMARKS

Applicants have reviewed the Final Office Action mailed 09/24/2003 (Paper No. 13) and thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. Claim 29 has been allowed. Claims 18, 21, 22, 30 and 31 have been rejected. Claims 20 and 23-28 were previously withdrawn. In this amendment, no claims have been amended, added or cancelled. Therefore, upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-18, 21, 22 and 29-31 will be pending.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 29 has been allowed.

II. Drawings

The drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they include the following reference sign(s) not mentioned in the description: 30, 68, 230. Applicants submit a set of corrected drawings, which accompany this amendment, removing reference numerals 30, 68 and 230 from Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

A. Claims 1-10 and 12-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,951,974 to Schabert et al ("Schabert"). For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully disagree.

Regarding claims 1-10 and 12-14, the Examiner contends that "Schabert et al. discloses a coupling assembly, comprising a first fluid conveying member (15)...and a second fluid conveying member (23)...." Paper 13, page 2. To support this contention, the Examiner cites the following excerpt from Schabert:

Referring now to the single figure of the drawing in detail, there is seen a pipe connection 1 intended for systems which are not accessible to humans, such as can be found, for instance, in nuclear facilities and in particular in a reprocessing system. In the pipe connection 1, two flanges 2 and 3 must be tightly connected to one another by remote control. Non-illustrated pipelines are welded to pipe stubs 4 of the flanges. Col. 3, lines 30-37.

In reference to the above excerpt, the Examiner notes that "Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary recites a pipe as 'a long tube or hollow body for conducting a liquid, gas, or finely divided solid'. Therefore, Schabert does disclose the screw members as conveying fluid members, and meets the claims limitation." Based on Applicants understanding, the Examiner appears to argue that both screw bolt (15) and sheath (23) are pipes and, therefore, are fluid conveying members. Applicants respectfully disagree.

First, the pipe connection (1) recited in the above excerpt from Schabert is the entire apparatus shown in the sole figure of Schabert, not just the screw bolt (15) and the sheath (23). In fact, the "pipe" portion of pipe connection (1), i.e., through bore (8), is sealed off from the threaded bore (16) by a seal 10 so that fluid will not flow into area surrounding the screw bolt (15).

Second, nowhere does Schabert disclose that screw bolt (15) is a pipe or is otherwise capable of conveying a fluid. Similarly, nowhere does Schabert disclose that sheath (13) is a fluid conveying member. Rather, Schabert discloses that "to close the pipe connection 1, a thread 14 of the screw bolt 15 is screwed into the threaded bore 16 of the fixed flange 2." Schabert, Col. 3, lines 49-51. "The externally splined profile 21 of the screw bolt 15...engages the complementary splined profile region 24 of a sheath 23 that surrounds the screw bolt." Schabert, Col. 3, line 66-Col. 4, line 1. "In order provide clamping, a nut 29 is rotated relative to the screw bolt 15...." Schabert, Col. 4, lines 27-28. "The nut 29 is tightened until such time as a desired torque for pre-stressing the pipe connection is attained." Schabert, Col. 4, lines 38-40. In other words, the screw bolt 15, sheath 23 and nut 29 cooperate to tighten the two flanges (2) and (3) of the pipe connection (1). However, unlike the claimed invention, screw bolt 15, sheath 23 and nut 29 do not convey a fluid.

For at least these reasons, the §102(b) rejection with respect to claims 1-10 and 12-14 is unsupported by the art and should be withdrawn.

B. Claims 1-10, 12-18, 21, 22, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,207,535 to Wilson. For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Regarding claims 1-10, 12-18, 21, 22, 30 and 31, nowhere does Wilson disclose a coupling assembly that includes a first fluid conveying member having at least one engagement feature and a second fluid conveying member having at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature, as recited in Applicants' claims. Instead, Wilson discloses an end fitting for a conduit (1) that includes a threaded nipple (3) and a ferrule (4), both of which are screwed to the end of the conduit (1). To prevent relative rotational movement of the nipple relative to the ferrule, a separate locking ring (12) is provided which is broached internally (13). The internal broaching (13) inter-engages with the external knurling on the nipple and ferrule to prevent relative rotational movement of the nipple and ferrule.

In response to this argument, the Examiner contends that the locking ring (12) and ferrule (4) comprise a second fluid member. However, this contention is contrary to the teaching of Wilson, because neither locking ring (12) nor ferrule (4) is a fluid conveying member. Particularly, ferrule (4) is merely used to secure conduit (1) to threaded nipple (3). As shown in FIG. 1, a fluid passing through the end fitting passes directly from nipple (3) into conduit (1).

Even assuming, *arguendo*, that ferrule (4) were a fluid conveying member, locking ring (12) is not part of ferrule (4), let alone a part of a receiving portion of ferrule (4), as claimed by the Applicants. Rather, Wilson states that "the internal broachings and external knurlings correspond in depth and spacing so that they interengage *when the ring is slid axially into the operative position.*" Wilson, Col. 2, lines 19-21. In other words, the locking ring (12) is separate from the ferrule (4) and nipple (3) and slid into place over the nipple (3) and ferrule (4) after the nipple (3) is inserted into the ferrule (4). Indeed, to slacken the retaining nut (9), the locking ring (12) must be *removed* from ferrule (4) and nipple (3). See, Wilson, Col. 2, lines 30-32.

For at least these reasons, the §102(b) rejection with respect to claims 1-10, 12-18, 21, 22, 30 and 31 is unsupported by the art and should be withdrawn.

IV. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Claims 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schabert in view of U.S. patent 4,280,723 to Moldestad. Applicants respectfully traverse the

rejection. Regarding claim 11, Schabert and Moldestad fail to teach or suggest each of the limitations recited in the claims. More particularly, for the reasons stated above, Schabert fails to teach or suggest a coupling assembly that includes a first fluid conveying member having at least one engagement feature and a second fluid conveying member having at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature, as recited in Applicants' claims. Moldestad fails to make up for the deficiencies of Schabert. Moreover, unlike the claimed invention, Moldestad permits the coupling members to rotate relative to one another to secure the members together.

B. Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of Moldestad. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Regarding claim 11, Wilson and Moldestad fail to teach or suggest each of the limitations recited in the claims. More particularly, for the reasons stated above, Wilson fails to teach or suggest a coupling assembly that includes a first fluid conveying member having at least one engagement feature and a second fluid conveying member having at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature, as recited in Applicants' claims. Moldestad fails to make up for the deficiencies of Wilson. Moreover, unlike the claimed invention, Moldestad permits the coupling members to rotate relative to one another to secure the members together.

For at least these reasons, the Examiner has failed to set forth a prime facie case of obviousness under §103, and the rejection should be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 18-0013, under Order No. 65857-0045 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

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Attachments